

# THE SPORTING WORLD

## Who Is the Leading Catcher In the Big Leagues Today?



By TOMMY CLARK.

**F**IRST choice of the great catchers of the major leagues! Quite a puzzle it is to pick the winner when all that goes to make a player great is considered from a practical standpoint and not from the general atmosphere of local prejudice as doped by some writers on the sport.

What are the essential qualities for a top-notch catcher? First, natural ability for the position, for made catchers never reach the top row; second, range, footwork and speed; third, throwing from all angles with accuracy and a knowledge of the runner; fourth, the ability to work with all pitchers and run the game; fifth, gameness and the ability to stand a large amount of hard work under a killing pace.

The great catcher must be a thinker, an inventor, a man who would make a success of almost any business calling for a level head.

How many catchers now before the public have developed all these important points of the game?

We have sixteen major league clubs. Nearly every team has two or more catchers.

### National League Backstops.

In the National league Brooklyn has to Bergen a natural backstop and brilliant thrower, who watches the bases, but lacks what is known as ginger.

Brennan of St. Louis is the hardest working catcher in the National league. He is always on the alert, has a great throwing arm and is of great assistance to a pitcher at a critical moment. But managerial duties have affected his catching to some extent. The same thing applies to Charley Doolin of Philadelphia.

Cincinnati has a good one in Larry McLean. When in good shape Larry can do the backstopping as well as any one in the country. New York's catching department is very weak. Myers, the Indian, is an in and out. One day he catches a fine game, and

the next day he performs like an amateur. Wilson is still inexperienced, but gives promise of developing. The Chicago Cubs have two dandies

in Archer and "Peaches" Graham. The latter is a very enthusiastic worker. The pair have all the qualities that go to make up a first class wind paddler.

thing in the world that will settle him is his nerve. If he loses that it's an ascension. There are times when the rule doesn't hold good."

### CONNIE MACK'S pitchers run the game.

"Take the pitcher's judgment," was an early season order from Manager Mack, and he never changed it," said Paddy Livingston, Athletic catcher. "Chief Bender and Eddie Plank used their own judgment the season before last and did so well the rule was made general. Everybody must use his head," is one of Connie's rules.

"One advantage of the pitcher's judgment counting is in the help he gets from the infielders. Our infielders were the pitcher's advisers. They watched the battle as closely as the battery men. That was part of their work."

"Connie doesn't count a stolen base on the catcher. It is even between the pitcher and catcher. No catcher can get a base runner who is allowed too much of a lead," is the way Connie puts it.

"There was never a call down for the pitcher or catcher where Connie believed a fast ball should have been used instead of a curve, or vice versa. We were expected to know what to do. Advice came before or after the game, and then it was up to both pitcher and catcher."

"Mack does a lot of things different from other managers I have played for. Every man on the team has his ear when a suggestion is offered. We were all called upon to dig up something at daily dope meetings."

### SUNSTAR'S OWNER.

J. B. Joel, owner of Sunstar, English Derby winner, is a nephew of the late Barney Barnato, the South African mining millionaire.

Photos by American Press Association.

The Boston club made a terrible mistake when it let Graham go to the Cubs. Kilg, whom the Chicago club traded to Boston for Graham, is not as good a catcher as he was three years ago. When at his best he was in a class by himself. Pittsburgh has a corker in Gibson. He has no apparent weakness.

Judging by the work of the men this season, the catchers in the National league should rank in the order named: Gibson, Archer, Graham, Kilg, Brennan, Doolin, McLean, Bergen and Myers.

### American League Receivers.

In the American league Philadelphia has two good ones in Thomas and

Lapp. When Detroit parted with Thomas his arm was bad. His arm came back, and he has been a big help to the Athletics in chasing the much sought rag. Manager Mack says he is one of the best in the junior organization. Lapp gives great promise. Stange of the Detroit team is good, but not a first class catcher. Stephens of St. Louis is a hard and willing worker, but lacks enthusiasm. Sweeney of New York gives promise of developing into a great star with more experience. Clarke of St. Louis is a good one. He is a good footworker and very rangy for his inches.

Washington has a crackjack in Street. He is intelligent, is a fine thrower, and he gets into every play.

He watches the bases and is a power behind the stick when the game is going against his team.

Boston has a grand backstop in Bill Carrigan. The latter was cut out for a model catcher in the baseball game. In Sullivan Chicago has one of the real gems of the profession. Ever on the alert, with a deadly throw, he is a catcher who coaches every pitcher.

The way the backstops in the American league should range is as follows: Street, Carrigan, Sullivan, Sweeney, Thomas, Lapp and Clarke.

Now that Street has been selected as the greatest catcher in the American league and Gibson in the National, which of the two is the premier backstop of the country? Many home

critics have their pets, but when it comes down to cardinal principles laid down to judge a catcher one will find that the best of 'em all today is George Gibson of the Pirates. The latter was cut out for the model catcher in baseball. Gibson is the man who can turn back the fleetest base runner—a man who can nip the boys out at first and third unless they are ever on the alert. He is the backstop who seldom drops a ball that he can reach. Game to the finger tips, he can catch the wildest delivery as if it were merely play—aggressive, on to all the advanced wrinkles of the game, cutting the ball to second from all angles, with a knack of spreading into position while the ball is coming to him.

## Star Fighters Are Killing the Goose That Lays the Golden Egg

**T**HIS season has been a very profitable one for some of the best cards in the boxing world, but for many of the good ones and hundreds of the lesser lights it has been a very poor one, due to the boxers themselves in most instances.

The exorbitant demands made of promoters by many of the stars have been the means of hurting the game in more ways than one, and the boxers themselves are now feeling the effects of the comeback. Some of the New York promoters are to blame for this condition of affairs, for they have jumped over one another and have bid ridiculous sums to get star cards.

These big prices were advertised all over the country, and other promoters found it difficult to do business with boxers without guaranteeing half the receipts and giving them privileges in addition which any other amusement promoter would laugh at.

In Indianapolis recently the promoters took in \$1,000 and then lost over \$500 on the show. They had guaranteed big sums to the boxers, and when they came to settle up they found they could not meet their obligations or get within \$500 of it. At New Orleans the West Side Athletic club took in close to \$1,000 for the Conley-Coster contest and still lost over \$500 because it had guaranteed Conley close to \$2,500 and Coster about \$1,000, which, with expenses, more than ate up all the receipts and left them in the hole for all their trouble.

At the McFarland-Kilbane bout in Buffalo the promoters gave a big guarantee and lost quite a bunch of money as a result. At the Wells-Cross bout in New York the promoters again guaranteed more than they could afford and lost a big chunk of coin. It has been the same in Milwaukee in several instances where guarantees have been given and also in Boston and Philadelphia.

The New York clubs have been losing money on most of their shows of late, but still they could not see or would not see the real cause of it. At last one promoter, Harry Pollok, stumbled to the fact, and he announces that he will give no guarantees, but straight percentages; that if the boxers cannot draw the money they have no right to guarantee.

"Philadelphia Jack" O'Brien, who put up a handsome new clubhouse in Philadelphia, has been obliged to close up because of the high prices demanded by boxers and the inability to make anything under existing conditions. Boxers like McFarland, Volgaist, Moran and "Knockout" Brown have been annexing all the coin, while the others—and many of them good ones—have been getting the crumbs. When the boxers succeed in putting the promot-

ers and clubs out of business goodby to their soft money, for it sure is soft money they get where the limited round bouts are held and no decisions given. And what boxer could go out and earn half or quarter the money he

gets for the short round bouts? If the boxers want to keep the game going they had better get together and assist the promoters by working on reasonable terms instead of trying to hog it all and kill the sport.

## Hunter Joins Ranks of Failures At First Base For Pittsburg Club



FIRST base is still the hoodoo position on the Pittsburg ball team. For eight seasons Manager Clarke has tried hard to obtain a player who could fill the bill at the initial station, but all have been failures. The latest was Fred Hunter. The latter started off well, but, like his predecessors, went all to pieces and was released. Hans Wagner is now playing the bag in good style, and the fans are asking how long Honus will last.

## McFARLAND ADMITS LACK OF PUNCH.

Packy McFarland, the Chicago static exponent, has finally come to the front and admitted that he lacks a punch, but rises to ask what benefit he would derive if he had one.

"I am kept busy filling engagements, and if you will notice I am winning all of them," says the Irishman. "So what use would a wallop be to me?" "I might knock a few cold, but I would not be as good a boxer as am, and, choosing between the two, I believe I would rather be the shifty person which comes very handy when you want to dodge a big wallop."

## Trading of Ball Players in Midseason Should Be Stopped.

**T**HE upshot of the recent Boston-Chicago deal, whereby the Cubs' chances for the National league pennant were greatly increased, will probably be a rule which will prevent trades of players during the championship season unless the other clubs consent to such a swap. The Boston-Chicago deal was a farce pure and simple. Boston was weakened by the deal, while the Cubs look to have a better chance for the flag now than ever before. There can be no objection to buying minor league players during the playing season, but there is a growing antipathy against the trading of players for the sole purpose of increasing one team's chances for the pennant. In this instance it is an injustice to New York, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh to have such a one sided trade go through. These clubs have a chance for the flag, and the deal again shows the lack of sportsmanship in baseball. Not that any one of them would hesitate to make a similar deal. The time has come when a stop must be put to the trading of players of recognized ability during the playing season. There was a lot of unfavorable comment a few years ago when Detroit secured Delahanty from the Washington club by means of a trade which won the pennant for the Tigers. Transactions of this kind do not help to give the public confidence in the sport.

## BASKETBALL STAR RETIRES.

Harry Hough, the Trenton (N. J.) star who has few peers as a basketball player and who last year received \$100 a month for playing forward and acting as captain and manager of the South Side team of Pittsburgh, which finished a close second to McKeesport in the Central league, has announced that he will retire from the game.

## Short Interviews With Great and Near Great Ball Players of Today

**"A COUPLE** of fighters on a ball club help a whole lot," cackles Catcher "Nig" Clarke of St. Louis. "These easy going fellows never get anything for their team. They let everybody else run over them."

"If I do say it myself, old Bill Bradley and I were the only 'crabs' on the Cleveland club. We would make our kick and be chased from the game, but would be right back again the next day hollering for our rights."

**VETERAN** ball players are criticizing a change in the rules affecting hitters who get to base when no one is retired. Says Hans Wagner:

"They tried to favor the batsman and keep him from getting a time at bat. Why don't they give him a hit in a case like this: A man is on first and the batsman hits a long fly. The fielder tries for it, and the runner hugs first, afraid it will be caught. The ball falls safely, and the runner is forced at second. The fielder never has his hand on the ball. The batter does not get a hit, but is charged with a time at bat. They had better let the rules alone, for there are too many such things coming up in game after game to monkey with new systems. Personally I don't care a rap, but it is going to be bad for many young players."

**"GOOD** curves are great assets," says "Three Fingers" Brown of the Cubs, "but there have been great pitch-

ers who had hardly enough to fool an amateur. Speed? Another grand asset. But some of the great pitchers didn't have enough speed to break a pane of glass. Control? It's a great thing to cultivate. But some good twirlers were minus the article to a great extent. Head work? Great! But what's the use of having a pitcher who doesn't use his noodle?"

"Then what is the greatest asset a pitcher can have? Nerve. It isn't sufficient when it isn't backed up. But give a pitcher the nerve and anything else and he'll be a great pitcher. On the other hand, let him have everything else and no nerve and he'll be a dud. There's scarcely a day when the pitcher isn't called upon to use his nerve."

"It's the one requisite in the make-up of a really great pitcher, and I don't know a single other qualification that is absolutely essential. The pitcher depending upon his curve suddenly discovers that his curve ball won't work. The break isn't there. It's up to his nerve. If he has lots of it he may keep the opposing batsman standing still until he recovers himself. If he hasn't the nerve he is in for a beating. So with the fellow that depends upon his speed. He discovers to his amazement that his fast ball is without the jump. If he has the nerve he may work along an inning or two or maybe for half a game. Suddenly it comes back and he's all right. If he hasn't the nerve he'll blow. Same way with control. A pitcher suddenly goes wild. The only